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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of school contexts, individual differences, and motivational goals and benefits on current events knowledge. A review of the literature focuses on motivation study of goal theory and self-efficacy. The sample includes 798 students from nine high schools (grades 9-12) in diverse geographical locations and of various socioeconomic levels and who had access to Channel One news programs in the school. Data came from a pre-test and post-test, conducted in February and May 1993. Findings suggest that students who study current events in school or watch TV news in school know more, are more interested, and are more likely to engage in news-seeking behaviors outside of school. The study presents a model which suggests that the relationship between school/contextual factors and current knowledge is mediated by goals, efficacy beliefs and news-seeking behaviors beyond the classroom setting. The question also is raised about the difference between "watching the news" and "studying the news" in the classroom. Contains 43 references. (EH)

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Achievement Goals and Current Events Knowledge

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Abstract

The study of current events is highly valued, but seldom addressed in a consistent manner across social studies curricula. The present study examines the effects of school contexts, individual differences, and motivational goals and beliefs, on current events knowledge. Findings suggest that students who study current events in school or watch TV news in school know more and are more interested, and are more likely to engage in news-seeking behaviors outside of school. We present a model which suggests that the relationship between school/contextual factors and current knowledge is mediated by goals, efficacy beliefs, and news-seeking behaviors outside of school.

Introduction

A fundamental goal of social studies instruction is to help students understand the meaning of world events—both past and present—and to appreciate the role that citizens and governments play in shaping those events. Traditionally, this goal has been addressed through the study of past events; courses variously labeled as history, civics or government provide students with perspectives on how society has arrived at its present situation. While the formal study of contemporary or current events has not been common in American school curricula (Shaver, 1989), millions of students are now being exposed to the topic informally. As of fall of 1993, more than 12,000 middle, junior and senior high schools show their students Channel One—a 10-minute daily newscast provided by the Whittle Educational Network. Uncounted additional schools show students CNN Newsroom—a 15-minute daily newscast available to an estimated 62,000 schools. (The in-school audience watching Channel One is estimated to be around seven million. Although the cable industry claims that CNN Newsroom is available to 62,000 schools, there are no estimates of how many of those schools actually show the program to students on a regular basis.) A recent study of a large sample of teachers shows strong support for students learning about current events in school (Johnston, Brzezinski, & Anderman, 1994)

The study of learning in the domain of current events provides a good opportunity to explore several important issues related to autonomous learning in school contexts. News broadcasts lack the systematic structure of other curricular material and schools are ambivalent about how much instruction should be devoted to helping students make sense of the news. What students derive from watching news broadcasts is likely to depend on individual motives to learn this type of material much more than in regular courses. But, because the context for viewing is a classroom, teachers do play a role in defining the learning task for students and in shaping their goals. This paper explores the interrelationship of individual differences, motivation, and school contexts on learning about current events.

Motivation and School Learning

Subject Area Differences in Motivation.

Historically, theories of motivation have moved from dynamic models that emphasize needs and drives (e.g., McClelland, 1961) to social-cognitive perspectives emphasizing the roles of context, thoughts, and perceptions (e.g., Covington, 1992; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Eccles, 1983; Maehr & Pintrich, 1991; Weiner, 1986). Much research suggests that students' motivation varies by social context and subject area (e.g., Ames, 1992; Blumenfeld, 1992; Stodolsky, Salk, & Glaessner, 1991; Wigfield et al., 1991). But this has not been established for a subject area such as current events.

Goal Theory. Goal theory is a social-cognitive framework for interpreting motivation (Ames, 1992; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Maehr & Midgley, 1991; Maehr & Pintrich, 1991; Nicholls, 1989). Goal theorists posit that students approach tasks with one of two achievement goals. Students who adopt a mastery goal orientation engage in an activity in order to master the task itself; such students value learning for its own sake, and do not see the task as a means to some other end. In contrast, students who adopt a performance goal orientation toward a particular task engage in the task as a means to other ends. Some researchers (e.g., Young & Urdan, 1993) argue that performance goals should be broken down into extrinsic goals (e.g., the goal of doing well on a task to get a

good grade or to get a reward) and relative ability goals (e.g., the goal of doing well on a task to win approval, or to outperform others). While it is clear that these goals predict academic outcomes, it is unclear specifically how these goals operate (Anderman & Maehr, in press; Maehr, Pintrich, & Zimmerman, 1993).

Many studies suggest that the adoption of mastery goals leads to positive cognitive outcomes, such as the use of deep cognitive processing strategies or critical thinking skills (Nolen, 1988; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990), greater creativity (Archer, 1990), increased motivation (Ames, 1990), and more adaptive patterns of help-seeking behavior (Arbreton, 1993). In contrast, students who adopt ability-focused goals tend to use surface-level cognitive strategies such as the rote memorization of facts and immediately asking the teacher for assistance when they encounter a difficult task (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988; Nolen, 1988). Students who obtain higher grades often hold mastery goals, although performance goals seem to be related to grades with samples of college students (Pintrich & Garcia, 1991) and to increased levels of intrinsic motivation, under certain evaluative conditions (Harackiewicz & Elliot, 1993). Although few studies have examined the developmental aspects and effects of gender on achievement goals, cross-sectional studies suggest that students become less mastery oriented as they move through early adolescence (Midgley, Anderman, & Hicks, in press), and that males often are more performance oriented than females (Anderman & Johnston, 1994).

The demands of the task will influence the types of goals that students will adopt (Ames & Maehr, 1989; Maehr & Anderman, 1993; Maehr & Midgley, 1991). For example, if the primary function of a task is to memorize basic facts for a quiz, then students often do not strive for higher levels of comprehension and processing. Although the relationship between goals and strategies is now well documented, (cf. Maehr & Pintrich, 1991), few studies have examined the multivariate relationships between goals, strategies, and behavioral and knowledge-based outcomes (see Blumenfeld, 1992, and Brown, 1988).

Ames and her colleagues (e.g., Ames & Archer, 1988) argue that classroom environments foster the adoption of mastery or performance goals, while Maehr, Midgley, and their colleagues (e.g., Maehr & Anderman, 1993; Maehr, Midgley, & Urdan, 1992) argue that the policies, practices, and procedures of the school as a whole have a powerful effect on the types of goals which students adopt. In the case of current events learning, it is likely that classroom and school-wide policies will have an influence on students' attitudes and goals toward learning the news, both in school and at home.

Self Efficacy and Goals. The goals that students adopt are related to the ways in which they approach various academic tasks. Self-efficacy is a personal achievement related belief that has received a great deal of attention. Self-efficacy refers to the belief people have about their cognitive capability to manage a particular task. Self-efficacy is a motivational belief that has been related to positive affect, behavior, and adjustment (Bandura, 1988, 1989; Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977; Schunk, 1981). Although we know little about the ways in which efficacy beliefs and goals work together, a number of researchers suggest that holding mastery goals is related to feelings of efficacy, and that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between goals and action (Maehr, Pintrich, & Zimmerman, 1993; Midgley, Anderman, & Hicks, in press). The power of self-beliefs may covary with goal orientation. For example, in an ability-focused environment, a student is more likely to adopt ability-focused goals (Ames & Archer, 1988; Midgley, Anderman, & Hicks, in press); in such a situation, the student's primary goal involves proving that he or she is more capable than others. Consequently, the role of self in such a situation is proving that the self is capable of doing a task; in mastery-focused environments, the role of self may be minimized, since the task is the primary purpose of action (Anderman & Maehr, in press; Maehr, Pintrich, & Zimmerman, 1993).

Understanding Goals and Beliefs in Context. It has been argued that one cannot examine the effects of goals and beliefs on the acquisition of knowledge without

considering the contexts in which tasks are performed (Ames & Maehr, 1989; Blumenfeld, 1992). Although prior studies often have not considered the contexts in which goals are adopted (e.g., Nolen, 1988; Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990), current research rooted in goal theory acknowledges that goals are set within contexts, and that these contexts have strong effects on goals, affect, and behavior (e.g., Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

Motivation and Current Events Knowledge

To date, there have been no studies which have applied current theory and research on motivation to the learning of current events. One study that did include measures of motivation did not find strong relationships between motivation and news knowledge; but the motivation measure (curiosity about the news) was not operationalized following current perspectives. In fact, most prior research on the learning of current events has shown that students' prior knowledge is the best predictor of knowledge (e.g., Robinson & Levy, 1986).

The purpose of the present study is to apply current conceptions of motivation to the domain of current events knowledge, and to examine the roles which goals and beliefs play in the acquisition of this type of knowledge. We hypothesize that measures that reflect goal theory and self-efficacy perspectives are strong predictors of what students learn from watching news media, but that the relationship varies according to several contextual features. If educators wish to foster the autonomous seeking of knowledge in their students, or "continuing motivation" to learn about news events (cf., Maehr, 1976), then research in the social studies tradition needs to utilize and build upon recent developments in motivational theory and research.

From a goal-theory perspective, the following questions emerge: Do students who adopt mastery goals toward the news acquire more information from their viewing, or engage in different news-seeking behaviors than students who adopt performance goals toward the news? Do students' goal orientations toward the news mediate the effects of contextual factors on current events knowledge? Do efficacy beliefs mediate the relationship between goals and achievement? Since goals are largely determined by aspects of the situation (cf. Nicholls, 1989; Maehr & Pintrich, 1991), does formal instruction in current events influence the types of goals that students adopt? In addition, does the adoption of one type of goal over another lead to different behaviors in students?

We hypothesize that the goals and beliefs which students adopt toward current events has an impact on their comprehension and recall of news events, after controlling for prior knowledge and other background variables. We also hypothesize that contextual factors, such as studying or watching news in school, will influence the goals that students adopt. Finally, we hypothesize that goal orientation is related to specific news seeking behaviors which in turn increase student knowledge of important social issues.

Method

Sample

The sample includes 798 students from nine high schools. The schools were selected to represent diverse geographical locations and socioeconomic levels. Each school provided four classes of average achieving students, one at each grade level (9-12). The sample includes 191 ninth graders, 217 tenth graders, 279 eleventh graders, and 111 seniors. The sample sizes represent those students for whom we have complete data. The sample is 49% male, and 51% female; 81% of the students are Caucasian, and 19% minority. Sixty-eight percent were exposed to regular news broadcasts in school. Forty-one percent indicated that they studied current events as part of a course.

Instruments

Current Events Knowledge. Students completed one current events knowledge test in February, 1993 and another in May. Although we used the May data as the dependent variable in this study, we collected data in February on students' knowledge of current events because other studies suggest that prior knowledge is the most important predictor of current events knowledge (e.g. Johnston & Brzezinski, 1992). Students were presented with a series of statements about events in the news and asked to indicate whether the statement was true or false. The events were selected from a content analysis of the news media for the six months preceding the test period (Johnston, et al., 1994). For each topic (e.g., the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, developments in Somalia, U.S. politics, etc.) several statements were used to assess understanding of the topic. Current events knowledge was defined as the sum of correct responses. The items that comprised each test are shown in Appendix I.

News-Seeking Behavior. Students also responded to a series of questions asking how many stories they had consumed on a variety of topics. Consumption was defined as reading a story in the newspaper or in a weekly news magazine, or hearing a story on radio or television news. Students used a four point scale, where 1 = no stories, 2 = one story, 3 = two or three stories, and 4 = four or more stories. The students were asked to use this scale for each of eight topics: the fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina, changes in Russia, the famine and relief efforts in Somalia, the Rodney King trial in Los Angeles, the President's troubles finding an Attorney General, the Branch-Davidian standoff in Waco, Texas, the World Trade Center bombing, and the role of gays in the military.

Motivation and Strategy Use. Students responded to a series of statements on a five point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Not True of Me, to 5 = Very True of Me. These statements represent original items, as well as items based on the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS) (Midgley, Maehr, & Urdan, 1993). Factor analysis guided scale construction. Items and alphas are presented in Appendix II.

Demographics. Students also responded to a series of demographic questions, including grade level in school, whether they had taken a formal course in current events (1=yes, 2=no), and grade point average (5=A or A-, 4=B+ or B, 3=B- or C+, 2=C or C, 1=D+ or below).

Procedure

The current events knowledge pre-test was administered to students in February. Three months later, the same students completed another current events knowledge test, as well as the motivation and strategy usage questionnaires.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Bivariate correlations among several demographic, achievement, and motivational variables are presented in Appendix III. Inspection of the table reveals several interesting relationships. Current events knowledge in February and May are moderately correlated ($r = .37$, $p<.01$). In addition, knowledge of current events is positively related to self efficacy, mastery goal orientation, relative ability goal orientation, deep strategy usage, and news seeking behavior. All correlations are less than .30, but statistically significant. Current events knowledge is negatively related to extrinsic goals ($r = -.18$, $p<.01$). Students who watch TV news in school get higher scores on the current events tests ($r = .15$ February, $p<.01$; $r = .18$ May, $p<.01$), are more mastery oriented toward current events ($r = .11$, $p<.05$), and seek news more often outside of school ($r = .18$, $p<.01$). Students' GPA is related to higher scores on both knowledge tests ($r = .23$ February, $p<.01$; $r = .26$ May, $p<.01$), self-efficacy ($r = .22$, $p<.01$), adopting mastery goals ($r = .15$, $p<.01$), and news-seeking behavior ($r = .16$, $p<.01$).

Several correlations among the measures of goals and motivational beliefs are noteworthy. Students who feel self efficacious regarding understanding the news tend to be mastery oriented, hold relative ability goals (i.e., they want to know more than others about current events), use deep strategies, watch and read news often, and do not hold extrinsic goals for learning the news. Various researchers suggest that a mastery goal orientation leads to more adaptive learning than performance goals (e.g., Ames, 1990; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Maehr & Midgley, 1991). Results in Table 3 generally support this notion for the domain of current events knowledge: students who hold a mastery goal orientation tend to be self-efficacious ($r = .50$, $p<.01$), to know more about current events ($r = .23$ February, $r = .24$ May, $p<.01$), to use deep strategies when they read or hear the news ($r = .66$, $p<.01$), and to watch and read more news stories ($r = .46$, $p<.01$). Being mastery oriented is positively related to holding a relative ability performance orientation ($r = .39$, $p<.01$), and negatively related to extrinsic performance goals ($r = -.43$, $p<.01$). Thus students who value learning and mastering the news are likely to want to know as much or more than their peers, but do not seem to be motivated to learn news in order to do well on tests.

Bivariate Relationships Between Classroom Practices, Individual Differences, and Outcomes

Do classroom practices influence motivation and current events knowledge? We ran Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) which is a multiple regression analysis strategy that allows for categorical predictors (Andrews, Morgan, Sonquist, & Klem, 1973). The advantage of MCA is that it allows for adjustments of effects of all independent variables, rather than merely calculating main effects and interactions, as in an analysis of variance model. Thus, in Table 4, the main effects reported for studying news in school have been adjusted for effects of watching TV news in school, and the main effects reported for watching TV news have been adjusted for differences in studying current events. Differences between "watching" and "studying" groups are determined from deviation scores. Results are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Multiple Classification Analysis of Motivational Beliefs and Strategy Usage by Studying and Watching News in School

	STUDY NEWS	WATCH NEWS	COMMENTS
Mastery Goals	16.54***	3.79*	Students who study or watch news are more mastery oriented.
Relative Ability Goals	0.06	5.59*	Students who watch news in school are more relative ability oriented.
Extrinsic Goals	5.54*	0.27	Students who study current events in school are less extrinsically oriented.
Self Efficacy	5.51*	1.88	Students who study current events in school are more self-efficacious.
Deep Strategy Usage	11.95***	3.63†	Students who study or watch news are more likely to use deep strategies.
News Seeking Behavior	6.55**	7.39**	Students who study or watch news seek news more outside of school.
Time 1 Knowledge	5.32*	8.39**	Students who study or watch news have higher scores.
Time 2 Knowledge	3.17†	4.72*	Students who study or watch news have higher scores.

NOTE. Each row represents a separate MCA predicting the dependent variable from Watching and Studying the news. Cell entries are values of F adjusted for other predictors in the equation. There were no significant Watching by Studying interactions.

†p<.08 *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.01

The sample contains reasonably-sized groups of students studying current events in school: 41 percent of the sample studied current events as a part of a course, while 59 percent did not. Two thirds of the sample (68%) viewed some type of television news on a regular basis in school.

There are several significant differences between groups. After adjusting for effects of watching TV news in school, studying current events as part of a course is related to higher mastery goals (F=16.54, p<.001), lower extrinsic goals (F=5.54, p<.05), higher levels of self-efficacy (F=5.51, p<.05), higher levels of deep strategy usage (F=11.95, p<.001), greater news-seeking behavior at home (F=6.55, p<.01), and greater current events knowledge in February (F=5.32, p<.05) and May (F=3.17, p<.08).

After controlling for studying current events as part of a course, watching TV news in school is related to having higher mastery goals (F=3.79, p<.05), higher relative ability goals (F=5.59, p<.05), greater news-seeking behavior at home (F=7.39, p<.01),

and higher scores on the February ($F=8.39$, $p<.01$) and May ($F=4.72$, $p<.05$) current events tests. Watching the news is related to greater use of deep strategies, but just short of the traditional criterion of $p<.05$ ($F=3.63$, $p<.08$),

In sum, studying current events and watching TV news in school on a regular basis are related to being mastery oriented toward the news, news-seeking behavior at home, the use of deep strategies, and knowledge of current events. Studying news in school also is related to higher levels of self efficacy and being less extrinsically oriented toward the news. The fact that both studying current events in school and watching TV news are related to news-seeking behavior at home suggests that procedures and practices supported by schools have an impact on students' motivation to engage in certain activities (Maehr, 1991; Midgley, Anderman, & Hicks, in press).

Gender and GPA Effects

We also used MCA to examine achievement level and gender-specific differences in goals, beliefs, strategies, knowledge, and behavior. Thus, in Table 2, the main effects reported for GPA have been adjusted for gender effects, and the main effects reported for gender have been adjusted for GPA differences. Differences between achievement and gender groups are determined from deviation scores.

Table 2
Multiple Classification Analysis of Motivational Beliefs and Strategy Usage by Grade and Gender

	GPA	GENDER	COMMENTS
Mastery Goals	9.55***	5.49*	Males and high GPA more mastery focused.
Relative Ability Goals	0.01	16.29***	Males more ability-focused.
Extrinsic Goals	1.53	0.95	
Self Efficacy	21.57***	12.96***	Males and high GPA more self-efficacious.
Deep Strategy Usage	1.40	0.78	
News Seeking Behavior	5.21**	20.01***	Males and high GPA seek news more often outside of school.
Time 1 Knowledge	24.03***	26.34***	Males and high GPA have higher scores.
Time 2 Knowledge	11.32***	10.38***	Males and high GPA have higher scores.

NOTE. Each row represents a separate MCA predicting the dependent variable from GPA and Gender. Cell entries are values of F adjusted for other predictors in the equation. There were no significant GPA x Gender interactions. GPA is a 3 point scale.

Males are more mastery-oriented, ability-focused, and self-efficacious toward current events than females. Males also report higher levels of news-seeking behavior outside of school, and display higher scores on both current events knowledge tests. High achieving students (as determined by GPA) are more mastery oriented and self-efficacious toward the news than lower achieving students. The higher achieving students also seek news more often outside of school, and obtain higher scores on both current events knowledge tests.

The Mediational Role of Goals

As noted earlier, research in other content domains suggests that students' goals mediate the relationship between contextual factors and efficacy beliefs, and that the

adoption of goals is a function of environmental influences and perceptions (e.g., Ames & Archer, 1988; Blumenfeld, 1992; Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988; Midgley, Anderman, & Hicks, in press; Powell, 1990). Does this work for current events knowledge? Specifically, do students' prior knowledge of current events, grade point average, and studying current events as part of a course in school, had direct effects on current events knowledge later in the year. In addition, we were interested in examining the possible mediational role of goals, efficacy beliefs, and news-seeking behavior. We used path analysis to look at these relationships. We excluded our measure of deep strategy usage from these analyses, in order to avoid a problem of multi-colinearity, since there is a relatively high correlation between deep strategy usage and holding mastery goals ($r = .66$). Results are presented in Figure 1, in Appendix IV.

Several variables have a direct effect on students' current events knowledge. Students with higher GPA, higher efficacy beliefs, higher levels of news-seeking behavior, higher prior knowledge, and who watch TV news in school know more about current events.

The only achievement goal that has a direct effect on knowledge is holding extrinsic goals. Students who are extrinsically oriented toward the news (e.g., only wanting to learn about the news if they are going to be tested on it) know less about current events, once the other variables have been controlled for. Mastery goals have indirect effects on knowledge through self-efficacy beliefs and news-seeking behavior; relative ability goals have indirect effects through efficacy beliefs.

Studying current events in school has indirect effects on knowledge through mastery goals, efficacy beliefs, and news-seeking behavior. Students who study current events as part of a course have higher mastery goals toward the news (and being mastery oriented is predictive of higher levels of self-efficacy and more out-of-school news-seeking behavior). Grade point average also has indirect effects on knowledge through mastery goals and efficacy beliefs (students with higher GPAs are more mastery oriented and have higher self-efficacy beliefs). Prior knowledge also has indirect effects on later knowledge through mastery goals, relative ability goals, extrinsic goals, and efficacy beliefs. Gender has indirect effects on knowledge through mastery and relative ability goals, and news seeking behavior: males are more mastery oriented and more ability-focused, and seek news more than females. Watching TV news in school has indirect effects on knowledge: students who watch news in school are more mastery and ability focused, and seek news more often outside of school.

The model suggests that goals do serve as mediators in predicting knowledge. Relative ability goals are related to higher levels of efficacy; mastery goals are related to higher levels of efficacy and news-seeking behavior. Each in turn is mediating the effects of several demographic and contextual factors.

The direct of effect of mastery goals on news-seeking behavior at home is particularly important. Prior studies have linked mastery goals to strategy usage (e.g., Nolen, 1988), but few studies have linked a mastery goal orientation to specific behaviors. Extrinsic goals are unrelated to efficacy or news-seeking behavior, but they do mediate the relationship between prior knowledge and future knowledge.

Discussion

The present study suggests that adolescents' knowledge of current events is determined by an array of motivational, cognitive, and behavioral factors. We review here what the data from the present study say regarding the three hypotheses presented earlier.

The General Model

Acquiring knowledge of current events appears to be a complex phenomenon. Students who are highly mastery-oriented toward the news are more efficacious, and seek news more at home, and consequently exhibit greater knowledge. Efficacy beliefs, news-seeking behavior, prior knowledge, GPA, and an extrinsic goal orientation have direct

effects on knowledge. Gender, formally studying current events in school, watching TV news in school, mastery, and relative ability goals have indirect effects on knowledge.

One particularly important finding from the present research is the direct effect of mastery goals on news-seeking behavior at home. While a number of studies document relationships between goal orientation and strategy usage (Ames & Archer, 1988; Nolen, 1988; Nolen & Haladyna, 1990; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990), few studies have linked domain specific achievement goals to behaviors. A number of researchers suggest that achievement goals and general motivational orientations which stress mastery and the intrinsic value of activities may be related to emotional and health-related outcomes (Covington, 1992; Maehr, Pintrich, & Zimmerman, 1993; Urdan & Roeser, 1993).

The Role of Background Factors

There are several noteworthy gender and ability differences. Males are more focused on relative ability, are more mastery oriented, watch and read news more often at home, and get higher scores on the tests of current events knowledge. Higher achieving students are more mastery oriented toward the news, more self-efficacious at understanding the news, and know more about current events.

Prior studies of students' current events knowledge have emphasized the importance of prior knowledge of the news as a predictor of current knowledge (e.g., Robinson & Levy, 1986). Our results corroborate these findings -- prior knowledge (February) has a number of direct and indirect effects on knowledge at a later point in time (May). But the present study demonstrates that prior knowledge is a proxy for other factors. Our data suggest that students who have high levels of current events knowledge engage in particular behavioral and cognitive activities which lead to high levels of current events knowledge in the future. Students who have prior knowledge about current events are likely to be mastery oriented, to be relative ability oriented, to be self-efficacious, and to engage in news-seeking behaviors outside of school, all of which lead directly or indirectly to higher levels of current events knowledge.

The Role of Context

Our results suggest that students who study current events as part of a course in school have different characteristics and attitudes toward learning current events than those students who do not formally study the news in school. Those who study the news are more mastery-oriented, less extrinsically oriented, more self-efficacious, more likely to use deep strategies, more likely to read or watch the news outside of school, and know more about recent news events than students who do not formally study current events. However, there is no difference between how much students are focused on relative ability (e.g., knowing more than their peers about the news). Although little is known from our study about the way in which current events is typically taught—e.g., the nature of the tasks students are given in those classes, it is clear that the mix of activities that comprise instruction in this arena has positive outcomes.

Watching TV news in school is also related to many factors. Students who watch TV news in school have higher levels of mastery orientation toward the news and feel more self-efficacious than those who do not watch the news in school. In addition, these students are more likely to watch TV news at home and/or read newspapers and news magazines more often than other students, and ultimately know more about news events than other students. The data also suggest that viewing may increase deep strategy use, although the relationship was just shy of being significant at the .05 level. Does merely watching the news lead to these valued outcomes? Little is known about mediational activities in classrooms when the news is being broadcast. It could be that teachers in those rooms focus student attention and encourage the kind of engagement and deep processing that we find, and that they do it in ways that are similar to what teachers do in teaching a more systematic course in current events. Clearly, more study needs to be done to disentangle viewing and the instruction that may accompany it. Other research underscore the importance of mediation to achieve positive outcomes from television viewing (Johnston, 1987; Johnston & Anderman, 1993). Given that 40% or more of all in-school adolescents are exposed to the Channel One television news program on a daily

basis, while additional students are exposed to productions and publications by CNN, Scholastic, and other sources (Johnston, Brzezinski, & Anderman, 1993), it would be important to disentangle the effects of mere viewing from various types of teacher mediation.

Reflections on Goal Theory

In addition to providing insights regarding the acquisition and mastery of current events knowledge during adolescence, the present study reflects on several aspects of goal theory. A large corpus of studies now demonstrates the utility of mastery and performance goals in describing motivation in the classroom (e.g., Ames & Archer, 1988), in the school (e.g., Maehr & Midgley, 1991), across academic subject areas (e.g., Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Young, Arbreton, & Midgley, 1991), in learning disabled children (e.g., Dweck & Leggett, 1988), in classroom and school reform efforts (Ames, 1990; Maehr & Anderman, 1993), in relation to cognitive strategy usage (Nolen, 1988; Nolen & Haladyna, 1990) and in social settings (Wentzel, 1991). Blumenfeld (1992) suggests that goal theory research will benefit by moving into new realms, and, by more closely examining relationships between goals and the social construction of knowledge. The present research moves goal theory into a new area, by examining the role that goals play in the acquisition of current events knowledge, which is a form of knowledge that is not treated in consistent manners across schools and curricula. Goal theory is a social-cognitive theory of motivation, which by definition considers the impact of the environment, as well as the individuals who operate within a given environment (Maehr & Pintrich, 1991). The present study suggests that the environment within a school can have an impact on the adoption of goals toward academic subject areas such as current events, which are not well specified in the curriculum of most schools, but which are highly valued by teachers. Students in schools which show TV news and where current events is studied on a regular basis are more likely to adopt mastery goals, and consequently feel more efficacious about learning from news stories, and are more likely to seek information about news stories at home.

The present study also demonstrates the utility of operationalizing performance goals into two separate, highly reliable constructs: extrinsic goals, where the "goal" of a task is to gain a reward or do well on some form of assessment, and relative ability goals, where the "goal" of the task is to demonstrate one's ability or to outperform others. In the present study, extrinsic and relative-ability goals operate quite differently -- being extrinsically goal oriented has a direct negative effect on knowledge, while being oriented toward demonstrating one's ability is indirectly and positively related to knowledge through self-efficacy. Research examining the roles of multiple goals and goal "profiles" suggests that task-related goals operate in complex manners, varying by subject area, age, and ability level (e.g., Harackiewicz & Elliot, 1993; Urdan, in preparation), and this study confirms this view.

Future studies should examine more specifically the effects of specific teachers' and schools' practices and policies regarding current events instruction on motivation and knowledge in this domain, as well as the confounding effects of students' socioeconomic backgrounds on learning about news events.

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Appendix I

Items Used in May and February Current Events Tests

TOPIC / ITEM
MAY (1993) ITEMS
Boris Yeltsin
Russia is led by Boris Yeltsin, who is the only person ever elected by the Russian people to be their leader.
The Congress of People's Deputies does NOT want to make as many economic reforms as Yeltsin is proposing.
In a recent vote, the Russian people strongly rejected Yeltsin's plans for change.
President Clinton did not offer Russia any financial assistance at the recent Summit meeting held in Vancouver.
The Federal Reserve System
One major role of the Federal Reserve System is to loan money to banks, which they in turn lend to consumers and businesses.
The Federal Reserve System can take actions that can have a strong influence on interest rates.
Alan Greenspan is the head of the U.S. Federal Reserve System.
Inflation, which is affected by actions of the Federal Reserve, is when the price of things we buy goes UP over time.
The Situation in the Middle East
Relations between Palestinians and Israelis became worse months ago after Israel expelled several hundred Palestinians it claimed were terrorists.
Palestinians claim Israel stole part of their sacred homeland, Palestine.
In the last two months, the Palestinians and the Israelis resumed peace talks again.
Conflicts between Palestinians and Israelis are relatively recent; the two groups were allies for several decades.
Legal Matters
The NBC television network admitted it had faked a GM truck gas tank explosion in one of its news shows.
Under pressure, General Motors had admitted that certain pickups it made are unsafe and is recalling them to modify their gas tanks.
Dr. Jack Kevorkian was recently sentenced to the gas chamber for the role he played in helping people commit suicide.
Doctor assisted suicides are against the law in every state in the U.S.
Events in the News
The World Trade Center in New York City was apparently bombed by terrorists from Germany, who were paid by South African separatists.
Most of the people who died in the recent fire and shootings in Waco, Texas were members of a religious cult.
The main government agency that was involved in the fire and shootings in Waco was the FBI, the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

FEBRUARY (1993) ITEMS

Last August, Hurricane Andrew

killed thousands of people in the U.S.
did most of its damage in South Florida
caused a large tidal wave in the Gulf of Mexico
destroyed billions of dollars worth of homes and other property
followed the path shown on the map

In recent months,

the economy of the U.S. has gotten much worse
IBM, General Motors, and some other large companies have greatly increased the number of people they employ.
Bill Clinton called a meeting of several hundred people to advise him what to do to improve the economy.
the Federal budged deficit has dropped by almost one-third.
the rate of teenage unemployment is much greater than the adult unemployment rate.

In the presidential elections held in November,

Bill Clinton won the election by getting just over 70% of the popular votes cast.
many people voted for Clinton because they didn't think Bush was handling the economy very well.
Ross Perot got about 18% of the popular vote but didn't get the most votes in any state.
Lloyd Bensten was elected to be the next Vice President.

In other elections held in November,

there was a big increase in the number of U.S. senators who are Republican.
Democrats maintained their control of the U.S. House of Representatives.
several women were elected U.S. Senators and Representatives.
all of the ballot measures that would have limited the terms for Senators and Representatives were defeated.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is a European country

where a serious war started in the last month.
darkened on the map at the right.
which was formerly part of Yugoslavia.
where religious differences have caused fighting.
which was recently attacked by troops from the formerly Communist countries of Bulgaria and Romania.
where the United Nations has so far refused to get involved.

People in the African nation of Somalia

have died by the thousands from starvation.
are revolting against the long-term dictator of the country.
have had to put up with both a civil war and a drought in recent years.
are among the poorest in the world.
live in the darkened area shown on the map at the right.

The United States sent troops to Somalia

to make sure relief supplies get to people who need them.
primarily to fight against soldiers from Somalia's army.
to stop Somali gunmen from stealing food and terrorizing citizens.
with the support of the United Nations.

In recent months,

small numbers of Iraqi soldiers crossed into Kuwait to take back weapons Iraq lost during the Gulf War.

the movie Malcolm X opened; it's the story of a black civil rights leader assassinated in the mid 1960s.

AIDS deaths have dropped dramatically due mostly to a new vaccine that cures the disease.

Arabs and Israelis are getting along better since a new treaty grants Israeli citizenship to all Palestinians.

the "Tailhook Scandal" charged that male U.S. Navy aviation officers sexually harassed females.

the electoral college actually elected the U.S. president; the U.S. Constitution says that the president isn't chosen by the vote of the public but by a set of electors chosen by each state.

the political situation in Canada is much better because Quebec has dropped its demand to be treated differently than Canada's other provinces.

many groups objected to celebrating the 500th anniversary of the date Columbus landed in the New World, saying that Europeans like Columbus harmed the Indians living here.

U.S. planes bombed a few locations in Iraq.

Appendix II

Scales and Reliabilities for Motivation and Strategy Use

SCALE	ALPHA
Mastery Orientation	.77
Understanding the news -- what's happening in the world -- is important to me.	
I pay attention to what is happening on the news because I enjoy it.	
It's fun to figure out why things like wars and elections are happening around the world.	
Listening to the news is boring. (Reversed)	
Performance Orientation - Extrinsic	.77
I read about or watch the news only when a teacher requires it.	
I read about or watch the news only if I am going to be tested on it.	
I read about or watch the news because I have to, not because I want to.	
Performance Orientation - Relative Ability	.70
Knowing more than other students about what's going on in the world is important to me.	
I like to show that I know more about national and world news than other students.	
I feel good if I am the only one who understands a news story.	
Self Efficacy	.77
I'm certain I can understand any news story if I try.	
Even if the news is hard, I can learn it.	
If I have enough time, I can understand even the hardest news stories.	
Deep Strategies	.88
I ask myself questions when I hear or read news stories to make sure I understand.	
When I have trouble understanding a news story, I try to think about it in a different way.	
When I make mistakes in understanding the news, I try to figure out why.	
I try to connect new things that I hear in the news to what I've learned before.	
I take my time to figure out news stories.	
I try to learn more about things I hear about in the news.	
When I hear or read the news, I try to see how it connects to something in everyday life.	
News-Seeking Behavior - Number of stories read or viewed outside of school on:	.84
Bosnia-Herzegovina	
Russia	
Somalia	
The Rodney King Trial	
Clinton's search for an Attorney General	
Waco, Texas	
World Trade Center bombing	
Gays in the military	

Except for news-seeking behavior, all items were responded to using the scale 1=Not at all true of me, 5=Very true of me.

APPENDIX III

Zero Order Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. May Current Events Knowledge	1.00													
2. February Current Events Knowledge	.37**	1.00												
3. Study Current Events In School	-.07	-.08*	1.00											
4. Grade Level (9-12)	.11**	.15**	-.16**	1.00										
5. Self Efficacy	.30**	.32**	-.09*	.09**	1.00									
6. Relative Ability Goals	.07*	.11*	-.02	.02	.39**	1.00								
7. Mastery Goals	.23**	.24**	-.15**	.10**	.50**	.39**	1.00							
8. Extrinsic Goals	-.18**	-.12**	.09*	-.02	-.17**	.02	-.43**	1.00						
9. Deep Strategy Usage	.15**	.13**	-.13**	.10**	.53**	.53**	.66**	-.12**	1.00					
10. News Seeking Behavior	.33**	.37**	-.13**	.12**	.42**	.20**	.46**	-.23**	.32**	1.00				
11. Current Events for Homework Assignments	.02	.10**	.15**	-.11**	.02	-.05	-.05	-.04	-.11**	.03	1.00			
12. Watch TV News in School	.14**	.18**	-.11**	.07*	.07	.06	.11*	-.02	.06	.18**	.02	1.00		
13. Grade Point Average	.23**	.26**	-.02	.15**	.22**	-.01	.15**	-.07*	.07	.16**	.02	.06	1.00	
14. Gender	-.05	-.17**	-.04	.01	-.08*	-.14**	-.05	-.05	-.02	-.12**	-.04	.04	.21**	1.00

Gender: 1=Female, 0=Male

Current events for HW, watch TV news in school: 0=no, 1=yes

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APPENDIX IV

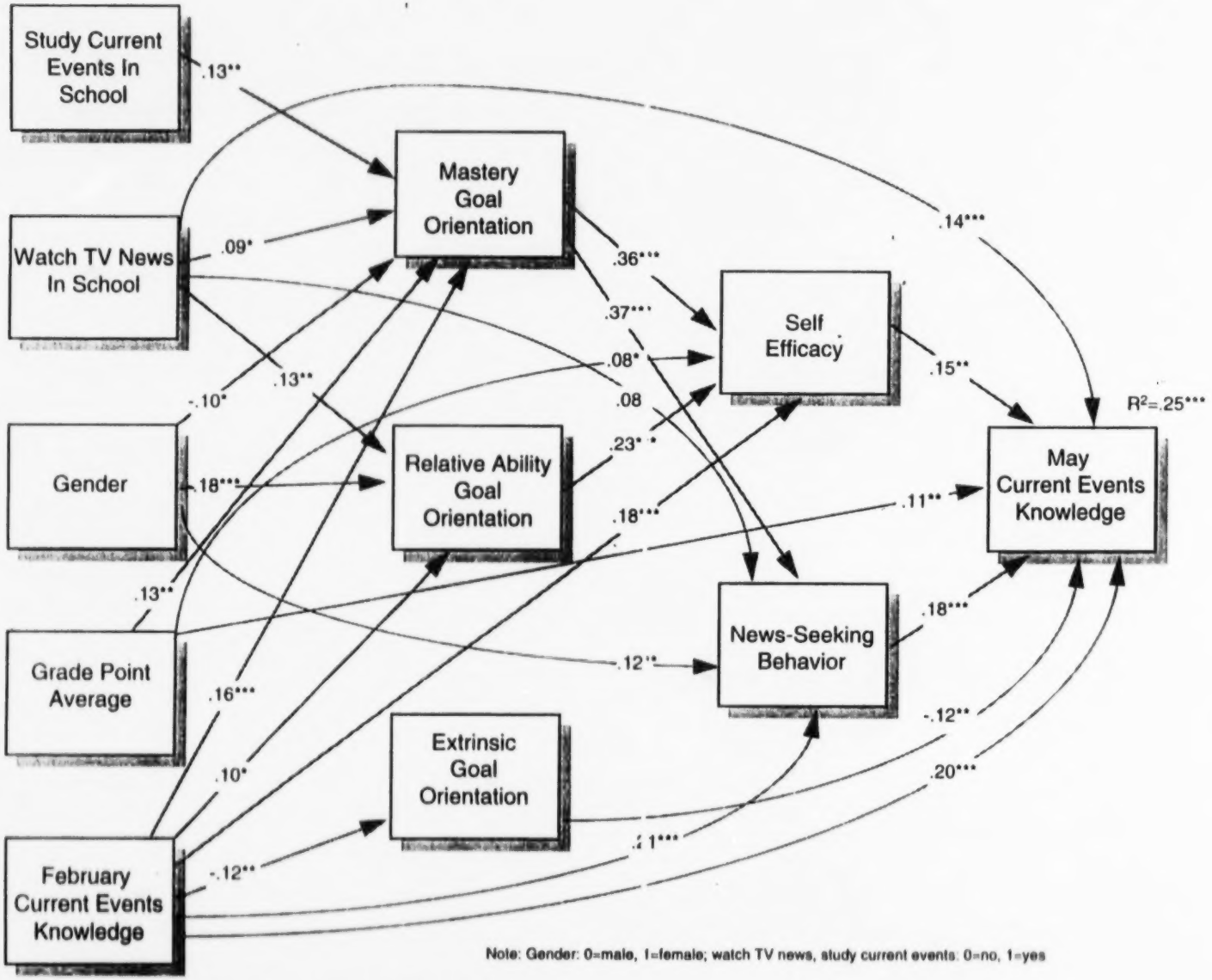

Figure 1 **Path Model Predicting Current Events Knowledge**